

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A method of operating a vending machine, comprising:  
2 receiving a request for a transaction from a customer at the vending machine;  
3 identifying a condition at a retail establishment; and  
4 based on the identified condition, outputting an offer to the customer in  
5 response to the received request.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the outputted offer includes a coupon to be  
2 redeemed at the retail establishment.
- 1 3. The method of claim 1, wherein the outputted offer includes a redemption code.
- 1 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the condition is a frequency of sales  
2 transactions at the retail establishment.
- 1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the condition is a state of a service queue at the  
2 retail establishment.
- 1 6. The method of claim 1, wherein the condition relates to a state of inventory at  
2 the retail establishment.
- 1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein the condition relates to whether a particular  
2 product is in stock at the retail establishment.
- 1 8. The method of claim 1, further comprising transmitting a signal from the retail  
2 establishment to indicate the identified condition.
- 1 9. The method of claim 1, wherein the request is for dispensing a product from the  
2 vending machine.

1 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of storing at the vending  
2 machine data representative of the offer.

1 11. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of selecting the offer from  
2 among a plurality of offers.

1 12. The method of claim 11, wherein the selecting step includes generating a  
2 selection signal at the retail establishment.

1 13. A method of operating a vending machine, comprising:  
2 receiving a request for a transaction from a customer at the vending machine;  
3 determining whether the requested transaction can be performed by the vending  
4 machine; and  
5 if it is determined that the requested transaction cannot be performed by the  
6 vending machine, outputting an offer to the customer in response to the received  
7 request.

1 14. The method of claim 13, wherein the outputted offer is a coupon to be redeemed  
2 at a retail establishment.

1 15. The method of claim 13, wherein the offer is outputted only when a  
2 predetermined condition is identified at a retail establishment.

1 16. The method of claim 13, wherein the determining step includes determining  
2 whether the vending machine is out of stock of an item requested in the request for a  
3 transaction.

1 17. A method of operating a vending machine, comprising:  
2 determining a condition at a retail establishment;  
3 in response to the determined condition, transmitting a trigger signal to the  
4 vending machine; and

5 in response to the trigger signal, outputting an offer to a customer at the vending  
6 machine.

1 18. The method of claim 17, wherein the offer is outputted upon the customer  
2 requesting a transaction at the vending machine.

1 19. The method of claim 17, wherein the trigger signal is transmitted by a human  
2 operator.

1 20. The method of claim 17, wherein the trigger signal is generated and transmitted  
2 automatically.

1 21. The method of claim 17, wherein the trigger signal is transmitted directly from  
2 the retail establishment to the vending machine.

1 22. The method of claim 17, wherein the trigger signal is transmitted from the retail  
2 establishment to the vending machine by way of a controller located remotely from the  
3 retail establishment.

1 23. A system for selectively causing a vending machine to output offers, the system  
2 comprising:  
3 a vending machine including offer means for selectively outputting an offer;  
4 detection means located at a retail establishment for detecting a condition at the  
5 retail establishment; and  
6 communication means for allowing data communication between said detection  
7 means and said offer means.

1 24. The system of claim 23, wherein said communication means includes a  
2 controller connected for data communication with said detection means and said offer  
3 means.

1 25. The system of claim 23, wherein said vending machine is installed outside said  
2 retail establishment.

1 26. The system of claim 25, wherein said vending machine is located remotely from  
2 said retail establishment.

1 27. A system for selectively causing a vending machine to output offers, the system  
2 comprising:

3 a vending machine including offer means for selectively outputting an offer;  
4 trigger means for generating a trigger signal at a retail establishment; and  
5 transmission means for transmitting the trigger signal from said retail  
6 establishment to said vending machine;

7 said offer means being responsive to said trigger signal by outputting an offer  
8 upon the vending machine receiving a transaction request.

1 28. A method of operating a vending machine, comprising:  
2 detecting a customer in proximity to the vending machine;  
3 identifying a condition at a retail establishment; and  
4 based on the identified condition, outputting an offer to the detected customer.

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